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"THE PRINCE IN THE MIDST:"

JESUS OUR CENTRE.

BY

SOPHIA M. NUGENT.

(Reprinted and Revised from "Christian Progress.")

"The Tree of Life, IN THE MIDST of the Garden."

"We catch the light, while yet upon its way,
Of that bright Morning Star for which we watch,
Now seeming but a point on Heaven's high shore.
Soon to stand out alone, the CENTRAL SUN,
Swimming in its vast sea of native light!"

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THE GRACE.



ALTHOUGH I should have preferred that this opening blank page should be left blank, on the principle that a good silence is the best preface to full speech ; yet, as a Clergyman, I cannot refuse to say Grace before meat, especially as I cannot but recognise at the first glance the invisible Presence of the Master and the Royal bounty of His Table here spread out before us.

“Jesus in the Midst” is the glowing theme that threads the whole Bible from end to end as with a track of light.

Resume, O Lord, Thy *primal* place at the centre of all life and joy as “the Tree of Life in the Midst of the Garden ;”—Assert, O Lord, Thy *purchased* place as the Prince of Life in the Midst of the Tree of Death,

gathering to Thyself the death looks of all penitent souls, and restoring Paradise with Thy grand, perpetual To-day;—Reveal, O Lord, Thy *permanent* place in the Midst of the Throne of Deity;—the Crucified on the Throne of the Uncreated—weakness in the arms of Power!

Thou that walkest in the Midst of the candlesticks, rekindle the light of Thy Church! Thou that art in the Midst where two or three are gathered together in Thy Name, link by Thy Presence every two believers together in love, and reside in the heart of each individual disciple, substituting Thyself for himself! So shalt Thou set Thy child in the Midst, in Thine own central place, to minister in Thy Name, and to show forth Thy praise, encircled in the everlasting Arms. Amen.

Reader, give this Man place! the Central place—for lo! He is come whose right it is to reign. Arise, anoint Him—this is He!

CHARLES A. FOX.

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"THE PRINCE IN THE MIDST."



I.

JESUS OUR CENTRE AS PRIEST.

"They crucified Him, . . . on either side one, and Jesus IN THE MIDST" (John xix. 18).

THE very earliest typical description of the Lord Jesus Christ, is this—"The Tree of Life *in the midst* of the Garden" (Gen. ii. 9). And at the close of His revelation, when He gives us a glimpse into the home of the redeemed, He shows us "*in the midst* of the street of it, and on either side of the river, the Tree of Life" (Rev. xxii. 2). So fully is "Paradise regained" that the very Tree of Life, from which Adam and Eve were excluded, is now again become the gathering-place and meeting-point of

all their descendants who have "washed their robes," and have therefore *a right* to the Tree of Life (Rev. xxii. 14, R. V.)

All through the Bible God speaks of Himself as being "in the midst." The central place is His by right. He claims to be the Centre round which everything revolves—the source from which everything radiates. When He plagued Egypt, it was "to the end thou mayest know that I am the LORD in the midst of the earth" (Ex. viii. 22).

We know that no circle can be steady or even unless the centre is well fixed. When it is firm, then the round we make will be smooth and complete, whether it be large or small. There will be no wavering, uncertain edge when the centre is settled.

And to look up further, we know that our sun is the centre of a set of planets, of which the earth is one of the smallest. If it could be moved from this central spot, our seasons would cease, our days would become unbearably hot, or unendurably cold: all life would disappear, and our world would

become one vast scene of death and desolation. It is because we revolve round an unfailing centre, set for us by the Lord God Himself, that His word has been true for 6000 years—"While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease" (Gen. viii. 22).

A fixed and abiding centre means life, fruitfulness, order. To be without a centre would bring death, desolation, disorder. It is just the same in the little world of each of our lives;—and of our life in Christ. Heaven has a fixed, immutable Centre. "The Lamb in the midst of the Throne" is the point round which gather all worship, adoration, and praise (Rev. vii. 17; see verses 10-12). And if we want to have our days "as the days of heaven upon the earth" (Deut. xi. 21), we must have the same Centre here which they have there.

Then, shall we not allow the Lord Jesus Christ to be "in the midst" of our life on earth, as we know He shall be in Heaven?

That place is His by right. But sin

usurped it, and the place where He ought to be enthroned was occupied by sin. "All evil" was "in the midst." Over and over in His prophecy through His servant Ezekiel, He speaks of the "abominations in the midst" (Ezek. vii. 9, &c.) How can He reclaim His rightful place?

There was only one way. And hundreds of years after, St. John writes: "There they crucified Him, on either side one, and Jesus *in the midst*" (John xix. 18). They little knew that they were giving Him His right place. They little knew that they were enthroning Him, and that by the Cross He was exalted as a Prince to give remission. The thief knew what it was to have Jesus "in the midst." There He was accessible even to that most sin-wearied soul.

Just think of it. Jesus "in the midst" of all Heaven's adoration: now "in the midst" of sinners—numbered with the transgressors: Jesus taking the place of transgression: Jesus taking His own place again—but on Calvary: Jesus claiming His proper position again—but by death!

Whether we like it or not, JESUS is the central fact of our world's history. Even the infidel, when he dates his letter 1882, is compelled to own it. The world is, in one sense, drawing its circle round Jesus, compelled to own Him as the centre even by the very date it uses.

But we want to own Him as our Centre gladly, rejoicingly. We want to exult over the glorious fact—Jesus is my God and my King, who hath worked salvation for me in the midst of the earth! (Psa. lxxiv. 12.)

We look at Calvary with eyes opened by the Holy Spirit, and see Jesus in the midst, as our Priest, to give us pardon. He cannot be the centre of our life until we accept Him as our death. Have you seen Him thus yet? "In the midst," therefore *prominent*, visible to all: "in the midst," therefore *accessible* to all: not far from every one—easy to be reached by the most sin-stained: not beyond the reach of even the most weary and heavy-laden. Do you say "I am so tired with sin I cannot travel far?" He answers—"I know how weary thou art,

but I am in the midst: even *thou* canst reach Me. Reach hither thy hand and thrust it into My side, and see that I suffered for thee."

When He was on earth, and the palsied man was let down "in the midst" before Jesus, both healing and forgiveness followed. "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee" (Luke v. 19, 20, 24). When the accusers had gone, and the woman was left alone with Jesus standing "in the midst," there came His priestly words of full remission—"Neither do I condemn thee, go and sin no more:" for He makes not light of the sin which He died to forgive, but *always* with the pardon links the power to avoid it for the future: and He ever says—"sin no more" (John viii. 9-11). For the place He took in death, He retains in life, to give power—continual, perpetual power over the sin He bids us leave, and "His biddings are enablings."

Yes, glory to God on high, Jesus is in our midst as our Priest to pardon. And it is just in proportion as we realise that He is the sole source of salvation, that He be-

comes the steady Centre of the life which He has cleansed. It is a simple matter of course, that when we see and own that we owe everything to Him, we shall enthrone Him in our hearts. "As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him" (Col. ii. 6).

Long before He came, His death "in the midst" of transgressors was typified. Aaron made atonement in the midst of the congregation, and so the plague was stayed (Num. xvi. 47, 48). The Cities of Refuge were to be placed in the midst of the land (Deut. xix. 2). And the people could cross into Canaan, fearless of the flood, because the priests stood with the Ark in the midst of Jordan (Josh. iii. 17; iv. 10).

And this last typical fact reminds us of a very glorious truth connected with Jesus in the midst as Priest. They did not move "until all the people were clean passed over." Neither does Christ Jesus, the High Priest of our profession, move from His central place. He is ever there to renew

the absolution needed; ever accessible to hear the confession of His forgiven child; ever ready to lay His hand on the head of His wandering one, and restore the lost joy with His ever fresh and full forgiveness. He is so near, and so prominent, that we learn to hate the sin which cost Him so much; for to keep Him "in the midst" as our Priest, means that we are always conscious of the wounds which our sin has made in Him: and nothing will make sin so hateful as thus to see its scars on Him.

If then Jesus is in the midst as our Priest to pardon, we shall know Him as our King and Prince to rule and control (Zeph. iii. 15; Ezek. xlvi. 10), and our Prophet to teach (Deut. xviii. 15), speaking to us peace (John xx. 19, 26), leading our praise (Psa. xxii. 22; see Heb. ii. 12), and countless other blessings.

So let the circle we draw round Him henceforth be even, and true, and unswerving; and all around us shall know that "Thou, O Lord, *art* in the midst!" (Jer. xiv. 9.)

II.

JESUS OUR CENTRE AS PRINCE.

"The PRINCE in the midst of them, when they go in, shall go in : and when they go forth, shall go forth" (Ezek. xlv. 10).

AFTER we have been taught by the Holy Spirit to see the Lord Jesus "in the midst" as our Priest to pardon, then progress begins. Our sun is "in the midst" of worlds which circle ceaselessly round him, but he is not an immovable body. He, too, is moving onwards, without pause or slackening, and is drawing "his whole vast family, planets, satellites, comets, meteorites," with him. They follow irresistibly. But this perpetual motion does not alter the fact that he is still the centre round which they all revolve.

And it is just the same when we think of Jesus as the Central Sun, who is both source and nourisher of our spiritual life.

Once join the circle round Jesus, by accepting Him as your Priest from whom alone remission of sins flows, and you find yourself drawn on irresistibly; there will be continual progress, which will be unfaltering and steadfast, just in proportion as He keeps His central place in our heart's love and our life's aim.

In Heaven they "follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth" (Rev. xiv. 4). Do we want to do the same down here? Then He must be in the midst, not only as Priest to give pardon, but as KING to control and direct every movement. He combines the two offices as no one else of God's pattern people, Israel, ever did. Among them, the Priestly dignity was kept to one tribe, and the Kingly office to another. But the Lord Jesus combines both, and Zechariah's prophecy is alone true of Him, "He shall be a Priest upon His Throne!" (Zech. vi. 13.) There is something very grand in this thought. We often fail in our obedience to Him as King, but there He is, the very One whom we have grieved,

waiting to forgive, standing ready to hear the confession of wandering, or of faltering allegiance, and to give full and unlimited absolution as "Priest for ever!"

But when we think of the journey before us, and our failures in the past, our hearts sink very low, and nothing comes more home to us than the prayer of Solomon when face to face with a new task: "I am but a little child; I know not how to go out or come in" (1 Kings iii. 7). He knew he should fail in the very simplest things. "Going out and coming in,"—common, homely, everyday words which touch each one of us. But it is when we get as low as this, and own that we are not equal to even the little duties and needs which may arise in our daily path, that the gift of wisdom is very near. And further on in His Word the cry of the helpless one is taken up by the Lord, and a splendid promise is built over the need, so that when we step upon the need, the promise is already there as our roof and our canopy:—

"THE PRINCE IN THE MIDST, WHEN THEY

GO IN, SHALL GO IN; WHEN THEY GO FORTH, SHALL GO FORTH" (Ezek. xlv. 10).

Would any one but God respond so exactly and so minutely to the child-cry of Solomon? "Do you feel faint-hearted because you are as a little child? I am the PRINCE, in whose hand is the power. Do you shrink because you are 'in the midst of this people,' observed and criticised, and keenly watched? I am 'the Prince in the midst.' Stand in the midst not alone, but with Me, and your observers will have to testify of you, as of Daniel, 'that they could find none occasion nor fault' (Dan. vi. 4). Is it about the simple things you tremble, the going in and out, the common daily movements and actions? I am in the midst to go in and out with you."

Do you think any of us *could* answer anything else, but this, "Lord Jesus, be my Prince as well as my Priest!"

Then let Him be! If He is ready to control every humble action of daily life, I think we will not disappoint Him by say-

ing practically, "I can quite well manage the little things by myself!" Our lives would be worth much more to ourselves in the rest it would bring; to others, in the quiet and dependableness which it would cause; and to Him too, in the quality of the service we should do for Him; for if we were in the habit of referring to Him every small detail, then not only we should spend our lives in good and useful things, but spend them to the best advantage. Jesus, "Prince in the midst," does not waste His servants' lives. And surely the simple words embrace all common errands, in and out of our homes, in His name; all journeys too. He will guide the meek in judgment as to what is best worth doing in all such things.

"I know not how to go out or come in." It is quite true, Lord Jesus! I know not how to *go out* to others. My words fail and falter, and often there are none at all. And my love, too, does not know how to "go out" as it ought and as it might. Show me how to let loose my love on others, and

how to clasp them round and win them, as Thine has clasped me and won me. Show me how my whole self may "go out" to others, and my whole life may picture Thee, who hast gone out to me.

"The Prince in the midst, when they go forth, shall go forth!"

Lord Jesus, we thank Thee for this word which shall never pass away! Teach me how to "come in" too. I do not know how to do this. Sometimes I have succeeded in "going out" and in outward work and life, but I felt very sore at being called to "come in," and to stop the outer work, to be shut in, like Noah, by Thine own hand. Or if the outer work has not been stopped, I have to own with shame that I have failed in "coming in" to keep my own vineyard. And teach me how to be, in my "coming in" at home, to live out the life there which I speak about to others in my "going out."

"The Prince in the midst, when they go in, shall go in!"

Thus He stands pledged! and when we

accept it, we find He *does* go in and out with us, and that nothing need be done alone. "*Where I am*, there shall also My servant be." His quiet, calming control will penetrate to every smallest detail, just as the sap in a tree runs out to the tiniest twigs, forming its little first bud as completely and as perfectly as if it had had long practice.

If His guiding is to "come in," in the sense of giving up outward work and being alone with Him, shall we grudge because He cares enough about us to want to have us "all to Himself?" When the Lord shuts in a child of His, He always shuts Himself in too. He can hear their *sighing*, He is so near (Ps. lxxix. 11), and He despiseth not His prisoners (Ps. lxix. 33). If He strengthens the bars of their gates, it is constraint on Himself to stay with them. He is as much "in the midst" when we are "in" as when we "go out."

It is our Shepherd King we follow, and whether He leads *in* or *out*, we are sure to "find pasture" (John x. 9). For His rule

is provision. Do you notice that the word "rule" is sometimes given as "feed?" (Micah v. 4, vii. 14; Isa. xl. 11, &c.) That just shows us that to be under His rule is to be fed and nourished.

And if He says, "I will be thy King," shall we say no? To go forth and come in always with our Prince will make our lives surely worth living. And by and by, when the going forth in weeping is all over, there will come a time of which it says they "shall go no more out" (Rev. iii. 12), for "the Lamb which is in the midst of the Throne" shall be the same "Prince in the midst," whose familiar hand has for so long led His people in and out. We see Him as our David, to whom we say on the day of His crowning—"Thou wast He which leddest out and broughtest in Israel" (2 Samuel v. 2).

"The KING of Israel, even the Lord, is in the midst of thee!" (Zeph. iii. 15.)

Then, do not let it be, that while we accept His pardon, we reject His rule. Let Him control the lives He has rescued.

III.

JESUS OUR CENTRE AS PROPHET.

“The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a PROPHET from the midst of thee” (Deut. xviii. 15).

WE have seen Jesus our Centre of pardon and our Centre of rule. We have joyfully taken His forgiveness, and by His cleansing we have been brought within, and are “no more strangers;” we have eagerly owned His sway, and are His joyful, willing subjects; we know Him, and rejoice in Him, as both Priest and Prince;—what do we need besides? We want daily teaching now; to come closer still, and to stay there, to learn the laws of the kingdom to which we belong, and the will of the King whose rule we are under. And as we look up to Him, owning our ignorance, saying, “Teach me to do Thy will,” the Holy Spirit again opens our eyes and shows us Jesus as the

Prophet, to teach, in the same position where we saw Him as Priest and Prince—"in the midst."

It was one of the words of promise with which Israel was met on the border of Canaan, "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto Me; unto Him shall ye hearken" (Deut. xviii. 15). And we, as we stand at the entrance of our land of promise, are met with the same assurance: "I will not leave you comfortless, I will come unto you. The Holy Ghost shall teach you all things" (John xiv. 18, 26).

How much are we realising of this promise?

For He is "in the midst" in this character still. We might think that the disciples were better off than we are, in that they had Him, in personal presence amongst them, to refer to in any difficulty. But He was *not* "in the midst" then, for He was only accessible to a few, and at stated times. But since His ascension and the gift of the Holy Ghost, He is, in the

true, full sense, "in the midst," accessible to each child, even the very youngest in the school, waiting to be asked any questions, and at any time. In human schools, the chief teacher keeps to the advanced classes, and leaves the younger ones to be taught by others; but in the divine school of grace, it is the joy and habit of the Master Himself to give as much attention to the little one who has last entered, as to the one who has learned of Him for years, and to whom He can confide His deepest secrets.

To know Jesus as our Teacher "in the midst" means not only that He is accessible and prominent, but that He is the *only* source of learning of the things of God. "The only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father," is the only one who can *declare* Him (John i. 18; Matt. xi. 27). "Who hath known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. ii. 16). Are we as willing to come to Him as the *only* source of learning, as we are to see

Him "in the midst" as the only source of pardon? This does not mean that we can only learn of Him, away from human teaching. Jesus has, so to speak, many lips, and He uses consecrated lips to teach of Him. We thank Him with overflowing hearts, as we remember how oft He has spoken to us through His servants, for "He still speaks in a strangely human voice, as when Samuel mistook His call for Eli's;" or, as when Saul asked, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" and he was answered, "Go into the city and it shall be told thee what thou must do,"—for God's voice was going to breathe through a human instrument.

But those who keep Jesus "in the midst" as their Teacher, are quick to recognise His voice in the new lessons; even when they sound through human lips. They can look beyond the preacher, and see Jesus as of old, sitting "in the midst of the doctors" (Luke ii. 46). They know His voice, because they know His word. And if He really has this chief and central place, there

will not be the fear of "our faith standing in the wisdom of men" (1 Cor. ii. 5), and of our adopting theories and opinions just because our favourite minister holds them and explains them so well. The proof that Jesus is "in the midst" as our Teacher, is that we search His Word more and more diligently and lovingly; and turn all we hear into intense fervent prayer, that the Lord the Spirit would Himself make it *real* to us, and show us how to learn it *by heart*.

It is very wonderful to think of Him as our Teacher, when we remember all the labour and toil involved in the word. Just think what intense *patience* is needed. Have you any idea how weary a teacher often gets, striving day after day to fasten in things into dull pupils; then the disappointment of finding the lesson forgotten, and having to turn back the book? And must it not often be bitter to an eager teacher to see the things he delights in looked on as drudgery and weariness by unwilling pupils?

But the toils and trials of the cleverest

teachers, with the very dullest of scholars, are as nothing compared to what the Lord Jesus has to go through with us. "O fools, and slow of heart!" is what He often sighs over us, and yet "it was to the fools He joined Himself," knowing what they were. Can we help breaking out with, "Lord Jesus, Thy patience with me is wonderful! I am indeed foolish and ignorant as a beast before Thee, and yet Thou dost guide me with Thy counsel. Oh quicken my *love* for Thee, and then my understanding will be quickened too, and the hard lesson will be pleasant when I learn with Thee; and Thou wilt not have so often to say sadly, 'I have many things to say, but ye cannot bear them now;' and Thou wilt be able to lead me on into now unexplored regions of Thy love, a 'land of far distances.'"

Every teacher must thoroughly know what he teaches, before he can convey it to others. And there is no lesson which Jesus teaches us, which He has not learned Himself. "He learned obedience by the things which He suffered." He has been

a scholar too, *learning*, not only knowing by intuition, or instinct, but by real, diligent study, not all at once, "but morning by morning" (Isa. l. 4).

And we know too, that it is when a man is thoroughly master of his subject, that he is best able to put it into the simplest words, so that the smallest child can take it in. And our Master's understanding is so vast, that He can stoop to the most ignorant, even "*sinner*s will He teach His way," as well as the "meek," and those who "fear the Lord" (Psa. xxv. 8, 9, 12).

"Who teacheth like Him?" indeed, in every aspect (Job xxxvi. 22). Who of us will respond more fully than ever to His invitation, "Learn of Me?"

We may just touch here on the question of earthly learning. Does human knowledge shut out Jesus? No! if He is "in the midst;" emphatically no. Is He not the spring of all knowledge? You cannot think of any branch of learning in which He is not supreme. As to literature, can

any equal the writings of His which have stood for thousands of years, retaining their grasp on the love of the simplest peasant, and the most intellectual professor? Could you point to any one who can write poetry such as His? Have you ever met an artist who can paint such pictures as His from the commonest materials, clouds, rain-drops, sunbeams? And can any musician attain to His music, from the chorus of birds in a June wood, to the glorious roll of the mighty waves of the sea?

He is supreme in all. Let Him have His place "in the midst;" own Him as the centre and source of all learning, and then you may learn to your heart's content without fear. Let all you learn throng round Him, and the joy in all will be doubled, if He is its centre. Every lesson will be glorified; and as you take up your geography, for instance, the drudgery of the hard names will be changed to pleasure, as you think, "It is my Father's earth I am learning of; and a child delights to know about his father's property. Jesus made it, and He is in the

midst of the earth." And the same with history, the account of the kingdoms of the world over which He shall one day be owned King; and with music and every other study you can think of. Keep Jesus in His right place; in the centre, and then all that revolves round Him will not separate you from Him, but will draw you to deeper adoration of His glory, who hath made "all things, and for whose pleasure they are and were created" (Rev. iv. 11; Col. i. 16, 17), and you will see *His* power in having created the great intellects, whose works you admire and discuss.

"And then I knew, that if only
We give Him His royal seat,
The earthly music will take its place,
And tremble around His feet;
Sweeter than ever, because to our heart
The Master is still more sweet."

And if we thus give Him His place, do you know what we shall find? That when Jesus wants to speak to others He will use us; for the days are not over when He

takes a little child and puts His arms round him, and makes him His text. Who of us would not love to be the child "in the midst" with the Master, clasped in His arms?

There is one thing more which must be added. We know the great rest there is in having as teacher one who knows exactly how to teach. And when we look *alone* to Him as our teacher, we shall have the same rest and quiet content. We shall not be restlessly striving to get an "experience" exactly like some one's else; but we shall say in calm certainty, "I can trust Him to give me an individual experience of my own." And so while deeply interested in the lessons learned by others, they shall not distract us from learning our own.

So let us henceforth trust Him fully as the Prophet "in the midst." We have seen our sins laid on His priestly "Self," we have seen the government of our lives laid on His kingly shoulder, now let us lay our ignorance at His feet as well, and own Him to be "in the midst" as Prophet, Priest and King!

IV.

JESUS OUR CENTRE IN PRAISE.

“ In the midst of the congregation will I praise Thee ”
(Ps. xxii. 22 ; Heb. ii. 12).

WHEN we have seen Jesus “ in the midst ” as the Centre of pardon, rule, and teaching, in His threefold character of Divine Priest, Prince, and Prophet, there is no doubt what one result will be ! Spontaneous, unlimited, unstinted *praise* must break out from hearts His Spirit has stirred by such a sight of Jesus. The life which has Jesus as its centre is the life which is most full of praise ; and to have Him in His rightful place must result in an unfailing song. To see “ the Lamb in the midst of the Throne ” is what awakes and sustains the song in which all Heaven joins—“ Worthy the Lamb ! ”

Jesus in the midst is not only the *cause* of our praise, but He is the *Leader* of it.

He does not only "put a new song into our mouths," and leaves us to sing it alone while He listens, but He sings with us. "In the midst of the congregation will I praise Thee!" He says to God (Psalm xxii. 22—words which are proved to be His in Heb. ii. 12), "In the midst of the Church will I sing praise unto Thee!" How wonderful! Blessed Lord Jesus, art Thou indeed so identified with Thy children that Thou dost share their song with them? And wilt Thou sustain their feeble and often faltering voice with Thy voice, full of majesty, strong and deep as the voice of many waters? Dost Thou allow our poor tones to mingle with Thine, and rise to Thy Father blended with Thine, lost in Thine, so that they share the credit which is due to Thee alone? Then, Lord, teach us to accept the honour of singing *with* Thee!

Praise which springs from seeing Jesus "in the midst," will be *sustained* praise. We know how that in any choir, one or two steady voices who know the tune, support

and steady the rest. Suppose you do not know the tune well, you know the help it is to lean your hesitating voice against the unfaltering one. It gives you confidence when you have confidence in another, and you can keep up the melody as you would never venture to do if you were singing alone. You rest in the strength and beauty of the strong one near you, and while you are happy in feeling that, even if your notes are not quite correct, they will be hidden in it; but, at the same time, you long to sing them perfectly. And the more we lean on the faultless notes of the One in the midst, the more sustained they will be; there will be better time, and fewer gaps in the harmony. We shall know what it is to praise "*continually*" (Psalm lxxi. 6, 8, 14), and "all the day," "at all times" (Psalm xxxiv. 1), and "for ever" (Psalm xxx. 12). Following His voice in song, it will not be so difficult to "give thanks always for all things" (Ephes. v. 19, 20), as we shall see presently He did. We do want our praise to be *sustained*, and

not only by fits and starts; and it will become steady if Jesus keeps His place in the midst as our Leader of song.

It will be *united* praise, too: not isolated, detached harmonies. Where there is life, the praise combines. In spring we notice it specially, as the birds in the still half-unclothed trees combine their notes, each little song mingling into one chorus of praise, until the individual notes are all blended together into an intertwining of beauty which cannot be separated. Nothing is so uniting as praise, and those who have praised their Lord together from their hearts carry His harmony into their lives. It is very uniting to learn the same song from the same Master. And how He loves it! He has recorded that He filled His House with glory one day, that "the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord" (2 Chron. v. 13). When it is round Him that the song throngs and swells, then we can "with one mind, and one mouth, glorify God" (Rom. xv. 6).

The praise will then be what will *glorify* God. We shall be sure to sing the right tune if we follow Jesus. He knows the song, and we do not fully. "Praise is God's revenue. Pay it unstintedly into His treasury. Defraud Him not of His royal income. Pour in the bright coin of His kingdom." But take care that the coin is stamped with the name and the portrait of the King's Son. Then our praise will be acceptable. It will be true praise then; God will get it pure, and it will not be mixed with mean motives. There will be no singing for praise of men. Do you sing in any earthly choir? Then ask that you may hear Jesus in the midst singing with you, and let Him lead your song, and then it will be true that "whoso offereth praise glorifieth Me" (Psalm l. 23).

God thinks a great deal of praise. He proves it by giving Jesus to be the Leader of the praises of His people. He proves it by the many records of those who sung to Him, from the early morning song of creation (Job xxxviii. 7) down to the new song He

puts into the lips of His rescued one (Psalm xl. 3), and on to the song which He has composed to be sung before Him throughout all eternity ; the song which has Jesus in its centre, and so is always "new" to Him and to us (Rev. v. 9, xiv. 3). He proves it by the trouble He took with one of His children recorded in Psalm xxx., for this one object, "to the end that my glory may sing praise unto Thee and not be silent!" For God will pay a great deal for the training of one new voice of praise which will sing to Him unbrokenly, and "not be silent." And He proves it, too, by "placing His hymn-book in the centre of His Book, for He wishes praise to be in the midst." He places praise in the forefront when He has prepared victory for His children (2 Chron. xx. 21). All tell us what He thinks of praise, and shall any of us rescued ones disappoint Him?

"The difference between prayer and praise is this—prayer goes in to God with the expectation of bringing something back again. But praise goes in to Him, want-

ing nothing in return. It goes in, and stays there with Him."

True praise *begins* in humiliation. It is always as it is in heaven, that when the Lamb is seen as it had been slain, and showing the wounds which our sins had made, that then the praise is stirred, and "Worthy the Lamb" begins. "Thou art worthy, for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood." And true praise *ends* in humiliation also; and as soon as the song is sung, the singers "fall down and worship Him that liveth for ever and ever!" (Rev. v. 9-14.)

"Why is there so little real praise? Is it because there is so little joyfulness? Nay, rather, it is because there is so little brokenness, so little contrition of soul. It is not beautiful tunes, and accurate time, and exquisite taste that God wants; He wants the music of a broken spirit and a heart choked with the tumult of its own emotions, and husky with a divine hunger. We are not broken enough to praise enough.

A soul out of tune to itself can alone vibrate to the touch of Deity." *

When we are downcast, sad and dark, let us praise *His* unchangeableness, and the light and joy soon flow back again when room is made by self, and its feelings and fancies are ignored, and a brave, determined stand is taken on His bare Word. It is when the "Word of Christ dwells in us richly, that singing with grace follows" (Col. iii. 16). And even suppose every other cause of gladness were taken away, there is still left this reason: "We give Thee thanks for *Thy* great glory," where our grand Communion hymn echoes the triumphant song of Habakkuk, pattern of a "song in the night": proving to us that praise *is* possible even to those who "by night stand in the house of the Lord" (Ps. cxxxiv. 1). When we are looking about for a reason of praise in the dark, God himself gives us a glorious one.

* From "A New Start," by the Rev. C. A. Fox (author of "Royal Interviews"), whose are also the other quotations.

"Praise the Lord, *for the Lord is good* ; sing praises unto His Name, for it is pleasant. For the Lord hath chosen Jacob unto Himself, and Israel for His peculiar treasure" (Ps. cxxxv. 3, 4). "Chosen unto Himself!" there is surely cause enough.

There is one song He loves to hear repeated—"For He is good: His *mercy* endureth for ever!" He heard it sung at the consecration of His Temple (2 Chron. v. 13): for it is a song for the bright, fresh joy of conversion. It is a song, too, for the battle; and confident of conquest, we may sing it in the fight (2 Chron. xx. 21). But it is a song, too, which is meet to be sung on the way to any Cross. The hymn which Jesus sung on His way to the Cross opens and closes with it (Ps. cxviii. 1, 29). "And it is a song which fits *all* circumstances. Every little detail in Psalm cxxxvi. is enclosed with it. Do you thus interleave every event in your life with 'His mercy endureth for ever?'"

Are we prepared then to see Jesus in the midst as Leader of praise? Shall we lean

our feeble voices against His and follow Him unflinching? His praise was given in all circumstances. He said, "Rejoice with Me," when a lost one was brought home (Luke xv. 6, 9, 32). He "rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank Thee, O Father," when He saw little ones learning His love and trusting in Him (Luke x. 21). He said, "I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me," for He could praise for answered prayer before the answer came (John xi. 41). He gave thanks (twice recorded) when giving away all His own food to His disciples, that others might be supplied (John vi. 11-23). He gave thanks over the broken bread and the poured-out wine, sign of His own coming death (Luke xxii. 19), and before they left the room He broke the solemn silence by singing a hymn as they passed out to the Mount of Olives to face betrayal, mockery, scourging, death (Matt. xxvi. 30).

Shall we follow in every particular? As He is *kept* "in the midst," our praise will not falter, even though the song should

have to be heard through sacrifice and suffering. He went through it all, that He might lead our praise; and that history of betrayal and death in Psalm xxii. is followed at once by the vision of Jesus in the midst leading praise (ver. 22). Only as He has this central place can we "in everything give thanks," and fulfil this part of "the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning us" (1 Thess. v. 18). It may be broken with tears, but it will not be grudged praise when it follows Him, who, as we have seen, found in every circumstance a seed which blossomed into praise, even though watered with tears—

"Till, as He sought Him lone Gethsemane,
He Himself sang death-songs of victory,
For so *praise deepened as He neared the Tree.*
Yet one step further, ere the Life-Tree sank
To heal the bitter waters, from the bank
Of depths that none could sound, one orphaned
cry,
As from lost God, yet rent earth's guilty sky :
Still from the Book of Praise He drew, and died ;
The Man of Sorrows is God glorified !"

—*Royal Interviews.*

V.

JESUS OUR CENTRE OF PEACE.

"Came Jesus, and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, **PEACE** be unto you" (John xx. 19, 26).

WHEN the Lord Jesus appeared on earth, one of the words of the song of praise which welcomed Him, was "peace!" (Luke ii. 14.) And then, when, without knowing what they were doing, the people selected Him as their Paschal Lamb on the very day commanded, and conducted Him triumphantly into Jerusalem, the same song which had sounded from heaven at His birth broke again from the multitudes, "Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest!" (Luke xix. 38.) For praise and peace always go together: and if it is true that when Jesus is in the midst there is unfaltering praise, it is as true that Jesus in the midst brings unruffled peace. How

can the "Prince of Peace" do other than bring peace where He rules?

Where He is born, it is heaven who sings, "Peace on earth!" where He is accepted as the Lamb, it is earth who responds, "Peace in heaven!" (Luke ii. 14; xix. 38); for heaven and earth are one where Jesus is in the midst.

Yes, we know it, and glorify Him that "we *have* peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." But this is only the beginning. This is but the ceasing of all warfare between God and us; this is the outer peace through the blood of His Cross, which He, our Peace, has made (Col. i. 20; Eph. ii. 14). This peace is one settled, final fact; but now we go on from it and ask, Is there no continuous, unbroken current of peace which may flow through the whole of our lives? Verily, there is. "Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you!" "And after eight days . . . came Jesus, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you!" Where He has the central place, there is

double peace. Peace begins the week, peace closes it. He enfolds us in peace, wraps us round in peace, shuts us in with peace. "No bolts and bars can keep out the living Jesus: in His resurrection strength He penetrates through the deepest darkness of depression with His double peace."

It was no new thing. His double gift was the fulfilment of a word spoken hundreds of years before—"Thou wilt keep him in peace, peace" (Isa. xxvi. 3; lvii. 19). It was the "Lord Jehovah" who spoke thus. And Jesus of Nazareth, despised, rejected, on His way to the Cross, echoes it, "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give unto you" (John xiv. 27). Now, in His resurrection strength, He bestows it (John xx. 19, 21, 26). How much do we know of this *double* peace? We heard Him say, "Peace I *leave*," and we thankfully took it, the legacy from the dying Friend, left us "once for all;" but have we finished the verse, and do we know the next clause, "My peace I *give*?" Not

a legacy now, but a *gift*; not from the dying One, but from the risen Living One; not a thing secured "once for all," but a continuous giving on His part, and a perpetual taking on ours. Is "My peace I *give*," as real to us as "Peace I *leave*?" If we do not know this double peace in practical experience, there is one certain cause—Jesus is *not* in the midst; for where He is, He at once enshrines and encircles His children with His peace.

The peace which comes from Jesus having the central place is *deep* as well as double. If praise is the sparkle of the swift river, which makes every obstacle in its course an occasion for breaking into beauty and flashing up its glistening drops into the sunshine, peace is the settled, steadfast under-current, which nothing may stem or disturb. "Oh that thou hadst hearkened to My commandments, then had thy peace been as a river!" (Isa. xlviii. 18; lxvi. 12.) Notice how often "peace and righteousness" go together (*e.g.* Isa. xxxii. 17), for when peace is founded on the righteousness

of Jesus, it must needs be deep and secure, and where His *law* is loved, "great peace" follows (Ps. cix. 165). Out on the Atlantic the wildest storms are raging on the surface, and the strongest ships are dashed helplessly to destruction; but deep below, far beyond the touch of wind or disturbance, there is a calm and peaceful region, where the tenderest shells can lie without being broken, and the most fragile seaweed floats without fear of hurt. Jesus in the midst *does* bring such peace. It is not mere words then to speak of "peace subsisting at the heart of endless agitation."

His peace is not only double, and deep, but it is *durable*. That it is joined with righteousness convinces us that it must be so, and we are again assured of it when He says, "*My* peace I give unto you." Can we imagine the peace of Jesus being shaken? Can we think of Him being disturbed? Neither shall ours be, if it be *His* peace we enjoy, flowing from His keeping His central place, and not from our transient, easily-ruffled feelings. He

does not give meanly. He gives liberally, and the greeting from His Throne is "Peace from Him which is, and which was, and which is to come!" Is that a peace which trifles will upset, which small breezes will ruffle? His peace is so durable, that it is said, "Of the *increase* of His government and peace there shall be *no end*."

His peace "shall keep." That is a firm, *garrison* word, and implies strength, and every provision on His part that it should endure and abide. And the "Lord of Peace Himself" is the only one who can give us peace *always*; and not only "always," but "by all means." Do you think it is worth while to have Him in the midst to do this? He can, and He will, turn every cause of fret into cause of peace. Sweet, deep peace follows on faith-praise. The birds give Him this kind of praise. Their song begins before there is a single bud on the bare boughs, and even if the snow falls again, seeming to break the promise of coming spring, they sing on still, the summer instinct within them too strong

for disappointment to touch. And *we* have more than instinct; we have promise and knowledge to rest on; and when we praise in faith, peace follows, and a quiet calm, as well as song, pervades the life which has Jesus in the midst.

"It is too good for *me* to hope for, for I have wandered, and Jesus is not in the midst now, as He once was." Some one may be saying this. Then turn to Jeremiah xxxiii. 6, and see that "*abundance* of peace" is promised to *you*, backslider, once you return. And the same song which has been sung in conversion and conquest, shall sound again in restoration and re-consecration. "For the Lord is good; for His mercy endureth for ever!" (Jer. xxxiii. 11; Ezra iii. 11.) Praise and peace shall be restored when Jesus is in the midst again.

The results of having "the God of Peace with you" are very glorious. It is the God of Peace who sanctifies wholly (1 Thess. v. 23). It is the God of Peace who will make you perfect, or *adjust* you (Heb. xiii.

20, 21). It is the God of Peace who conquers in you (Rom. xvi. 20). Will you test Him?

Shall we *let* the peace of God **RULE** in our hearts? There is only one way. It is by saying, "**RULE** *Thou* in the midst." Then His testimony of us shall be, "He walked with Me in peace" (Mal. ii. 6).

We shall know this double, deep, durable peace only by Jesus, the Prince of Peace, being in the midst. "Peace is a Person!" It is said, "This *Man* shall be the Peace." Is it not worth while to have Him on board, not asleep, but as **MASTER**? Then He says, "Peace, be still," and immediately "there is a great calm, because there is a great **CHRIST**!" When He says, "It is I," there is instant peace.

"Father of Spirits, when for help I cry,
Let the great Spirit answer, 'It is I.'
I ask no more, vouchsafe to me no name;
My spirit shelters in that great 'I AM.'
Winds, waves, and vessel, all alike shall rest,
Anchored within the harbour of Thy breast!"
—*Royal Interviews.*

VI.

JESUS OUR CENTRE IN PRAYER.

“Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matt. xviii. 20).

WHEN the Lord Jesus is our centre of praise and peace, it unites those around Him in a very firm bond; and it becomes our necessity to pray together. And He provided for this, and left us this word, which has been the standing ground of all gatherings of His people ever since, “Where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matt. xviii. 20). It is often taken as a *promise*, and quoted as if He said—“there will I be in the midst.” But it is even fuller and deeper, it is a *fact*—“there *am* I!” It is not that we assemble together, and then

give Him a united invitation to join us ; it is that *He* has given *us* the invitation ; *He* has said " Come ; " His voice has allured us, He is present first, and we circle round Him.

It would make many of our meetings for prayer very different to what they are, if each one who came believed this word, and responded, " Thou, O Lord, art in the midst ! " We should give Him the lead then ; we should hear Him pray, and we should follow His petitions. And the consequence would be, that our hearts should be warmed, and that we should separate with the joyful certainty, " I know I *have* the petitions I have desired of Him ! " (1 John v. 14, 15.)

For whenever Jesus is recognised as " in the midst," He inspires our desires, and makes us wish for the things that He is able to grant. Could we ask for anything which it would not please Him to give us, if we really believed that He was beside us, holding out His hands, as it were, to receive our requests, and to pass them on to His Father and our Father as His own

petitions? "The Lord fulfil all *Thy* petitions" (Ps. xx. 5). Nothing which He asks is ever denied. He said, "I knew that Thou hearest Me always!" (John xi. 42.) Thus, when He is "in the midst," it secures that our petitions are granted, because He inspires the wish for only those things He can give. He puts this in another form, when He says, "If ye abide in Me, and *My words abide in you*, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (John xv. 7). And again, "We know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God" (Rom. viii. 26, 27).

So that Jesus, "in the midst," when we pray, whether together or alone, makes our prayers *successful*. He says, "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven.

For there am I in the midst." Here is indeed a grand way of fulfilling His word, "If two of you agree!" If He and I agree together, will not that make a prevailing petition?

Jesus "in the midst" will also make our prayer *sustained*. We shall be able to understand what "pray without ceasing" means, and we shall know what it is to "continue in prayer." In the old days it was the business of the high priest to see that the fire and fragrance were always ascending from the golden altar in the holy place (Ex. xxx. 7, 8); it was to be a "*perpetual* incense." No one else might burn the incense on it but the high priest, and there was only one kind of incense to be used upon it. Our High Priest, Christ Jesus, hath charge of the keeping alight of the flame of prayer, so that it and the incense of His intercession may be continually rising to God from the altar in front of the Throne (Rev. viii. 3).

When Jesus is "in the midst" we see how sustained His prayer was. It is said

of Him that "He continued all night in prayer to God" (Luke vi. 12). He prayed before teaching and healing (Luke v. 16); before choosing His apostles, (Luke vi. 12); before He spoke of His death for the first time (Luke ix. 18); before His transfiguration (Luke ix. 28); and He came down from prayer to still the storm (Matt. xiv. 23). It was seeing Him pray that made His disciples long to pray too (Luke xi. 1). He prayed for His individual disciple (Luke xxii. 32), He prayed for His whole Church (John xvii.) Every circumstance was an opportunity for speaking to His Father. And if He is "in the midst" we shall do the same, and act on what He said,—that "men ought *always* to pray."

Yes, there will be *sustained* prayer when Jesus in the midst is recognised, for how can we help speaking to our dearest Friend when we know He is beside us? And His Father and ours expects and watches for this continual ascent of prayer. "Let Me hear thy voice!" He is so anxious to hear His child's voice, that He comes to one

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and says, "Ask what I shall give thee." And Jesus is so One with Him that He says to another, "What would ye that I should do for you?" And again, "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" and another time He even suggested the prayer He was going to answer, "Wilt thou be made whole?"

Who among us is disappointing Him by "restraining prayer" before Him? whose heart is like an altar with its fire gone out, and only a dead heap of ashes where there was a bright flame? Oh, invite Him back! and He will re-light the fire, and re-kindle the flame by His presence. He will not refuse to come back into the poor, cold heart, and nourish and cherish the flame, which will revive as soon as ever He is "in the midst" again. And if the prayer ceased because of separation from others of His children, and of failure in *united* prayer, join them again!

"One cause of the weakness of the Church is her feebleness in prayer. Here is the most tremendous power lying before

us, and yet how few of us use it as we might. Here is the stream of electricity which links us at once with the Throne of God, and brings all its power to bear on our need and suffering, far swifter than the lightning. Here is a mighty instrument whose machinery is so simple that a little child may use it. (See Daniel calling his friends to prayer,—Dan. ii. 17, 18,—and then revealing to the king the secret hidden from all the wise men.)

"And see how Christ prayed His way through Gethsemane, as 'being in an agony, He prayed *more* earnestly.' Hear Him using 'the same words,' His soul throwing itself out as an anchor grasping God, with words not eloquent, but intense, 'Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me!' He prayed in different ways,—in the grand, stately, sustained prayer of John xvii., lifting His look to His Father in perfect union, and with the gaze of entire satisfaction with His Will; and in the conflict in Gethsemane, breathing out His soul in short, brief grapplings

of prayer. And from thence, though the bloody sweat lay on the earth in witness to His agony, He arose calm and serene. Prayer had given Him strength, and He could meet His enemies undisturbed; He could face the Cross—the Cross was conquered now.*

He stands "in the midst" also to show us "that the best way through any cross is to pray for others who are in greater need than we are ourselves." His first prayer from the Cross was, "Father, forgive them!" One proof that He has that central place is that we shall pray for others, and shall follow His voice as we hear it rise in intercessory prayer. He is ever living to make intercession, and He gives us the great honour of sharing this work with Him.

If Jesus is "in the midst," we shall always speak to God as *Father*, we shall always come as little children come, freely, and with the reverent familiarity of those

* From an Address by the Rev. C. A. Fox.

who belong to the family, and who have the right of access at any moment. On seven occasions where we are admitted into the most sacred precincts of Jesus' prayers, and are allowed to listen to the very words He used, He spoke to God as "Father" (the earliest recorded in Matt. xi. 25, the latest in Luke xxiii. 46).

Let us think what it cost the Lord Jesus to be able to give us this free, unfettered assurance of being "in the midst" when we meet for prayer. Have we any idea of the sacred and costly thing which prayer is? We talk lightly of going to the prayer-meeting, as if it were a common thing. We fall on our knees at the customary times, almost thoughtless of what we are doing. But pause, and recall what it cost Him to enable us to "draw near:" "Having boldness to enter into the holiest by *the blood of Jesus*; by a new and living way . . . through the veil, that is to say, *His flesh*" (Heb. x. 19, 20). There is the price paid for our power of prayer. Every real prayer is by the road of His

body ; we enter under the gateway of His rent flesh. Each petition is "*through* Jesus Christ our Lord."

It cost Him still more to give this right. I have said that He prayed to God as "Father." But there was one time when this name was dropped, and from the deepest depth of His agony on the Cross He cried, not Father, but "My God, My God!" He became fatherless, as it were, under the crushing weight of our sin, that never henceforth might any redeemed child of His have to know the same. His loss of God as Father is the price He paid that we might gain Him as our Father.

We have seen, too, that the petitions we present when Jesus is "in the midst" are successful: for He says, "Thou hearest *Me* always." But there was one time when He was *not* heard. "Father, save Me from this hour! If it be possible, let this cup pass from Me!" and He was *not* saved from that hour, and the cup did *not* pass from Him. This *unanswered* prayer of His is the ground by which He can claim that

all of ours which He presents should be answered.

And once more. We have seen what a mighty power prayer is, and how He used it to bring Himself through Gethsemane and the Cross. But once He refused to wield it—"Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will presently give Me more than twelve legions of angels?" (Matt. xxvi. 53.) If He had used the resistless power of prayer then, we should never be able to use it now; if His prayer in the Garden had been answered, we should never have had the right to see ours answered; if He had not been shut out from the smile of His Father's face, we should never have been able to "draw near."

Because He was unanswered, we are answered.

Because He left the power unused, it is free to us to use.

Because He was shut out, we may come in.

There is the cost of prayer to Him !

Shall we not use the right so dearly won, and draw near, in full assurance of faith, circling round Him, in the midst, who leads our heart's deepest yearnings, alone or united, in sorrow or joy, pain, temptation, or toil ?

“ For lo ! henceforth
To beg is kingly ; yea, upon thy knees
To wield the sceptre of a want, a cry,
Is sovereignty high God cannot resist,
But hearkens to obey ! ”

—*Royal Interviews.*

Let us use that sovereignty as Jesus used it, saying, “ Father, I will,” because He only willed what His Father willed. Then the joy of answered prayer will be always ours.

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and it becomes true that in the furnace the form of the One in the midst is like the Son of God (Dan. iii. 25).

In one aspect the sufferings of the Lord Jesus cannot be shared by us. There is one gate of suffering of which it has to be said, "This gate shall be shut, it shall not be opened, and no man shall enter in by it; because the Lord, the God of Israel, hath entered in by it, therefore it shall be shut" (Ezek. xlv. 2). The door into His *expiatory* suffering is closed to all but Him; here He is unapproachable. "Of the people there was none with Me" (Isa. lxiii. 3). But just because of this, every child of His can count on His presence in the fire. His own loneliness, through that weight of unmeasured suffering, is the price He paid to say, "When *thou* passest through the waters I will be with thee" (Isa. xliii. 2). We can pass through no fire and no waters in which He is not "in the midst." He is the great central Sufferer, to whom all woes are known. Standing there "in the midst," every arrow of sorrow meets in

all of ours which He presents should be answered.

And once more. We have seen what a mighty power prayer is, and how He used it to bring Himself through Gethsemane and the Cross. But once He refused to wield it—"Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will presently give Me more than twelve legions of angels?" (Matt. xxvi. 53.) If He had used the resistless power of prayer then, we should never be able to use it now; if His prayer in the Garden had been answered, we should never have had the right to see ours answered; if He had not been shut out from the smile of His Father's face, we should never have been able to "draw near."

Because He was unanswered, we are answered.

Because He left the power unused, it is free to us to use.

Because He was shut out, we may come in.

There is the cost of prayer to Him !

whom He values.
 "In the fire, ye
 "In the fire" (Num.
 "In the fire" is a sign of
 "In the fire," a proof that
 "In the fire." It is the
 "In the fire; the
 Which should
 "In the fire, or
 a. ix. 19)—
 "In the fire, that
 "In the fire, untroubled,
 "In the fire, so precious
 "In the fire, from purifying
 "In the fire, be by fire or
 He speaks of
 "In the fire, He values.
 "In the fire, the furnace
 a. xlviii. 10;
 "In the fire, becomes a *pro-*
 "In the fire, refine them
 "In the fire, try them as
 "In the fire, God chastens
 "In the fire, that he *is* a
 "In the fire," means to

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we shall glorify Him. When He is with us, even those who know Him not will recognise it and be awed, as the heathen king was of old. Thus we shall glorify Him even in the fires (Isa. xxiv. 15). Then He is free to work His will upon us. "Do you know what *chased* silver is? It is *chastened* silver; silver so fretted with careful instruments that it is made to represent every kind of flower and fruit, and becomes tenfold above its original value. So with His wonderful instruments (and He may employ very human ones—frettings, frictions, failures, and contradictions of others), He is able to picture every kind of fruit and flower on His chastened child; and the effect of the chastening is to yield peaceable fruit." So shall He be glorified.

It is *not* pleasant at the time. He Himself says it is "not joyous, but *grievous*." He would not put trouble before us under the figure of fire and water, if He did not mean us to feel the pain of it.

The other chief result is the power which suffering with Him in the midst gives us

to sympathise with others. We can have real "compassion" then, for the word means to "*suffer with.*" Is this no gain? And so—

"Measure thy life by loss instead of gain ;
Not by the wine drunk, but by the wine poured
forth,
For love's strength standeth in love's sacrifice,
And whoso suffers most hath most to give."

"Lord Jesus, we thank Thee that *Thou* art the Refiner ! We thank Thee that it is wounded hands which have to do with wounded souls ; that it is eyes which have wept which have to look on me in the furnace, and watch me through the agony." We thank Thee that Thy love is so strong that it can endure to hear me cry out for deliverance, and not yield until Thy image is seen in me. We thank Thee that Thou dost "sit" by in calm patience ; that it is no hasty, hurried work, but sure, though slow, and we do say, "*Blessed* is the man whom *Thou* chastenest !"

A SONG IN THE NIGHT,

OR,

AFTER SUFFERING, SHINING.

WHAT the Master has told you in darkness
That speak ye in the light ;
For the mightiest sons of thunder
Are the lonely seers of the night.

GOD's voice which men utter in sunshine
Was a vision first in the dark ;
And the fire must be laid in secret
That grace ignites with a spark.

As the black west wind of the moorland
Left lodged in the drifting boughs
Of yon knotted and ancient yew-trees,
Is the glory of mountain brows,—

As yon clouds that wait dark o'er the mountains
Round the gates of the sleeping Sun,
As the grey lake brooding in shadow
Counts the stars out one by one,—

So the soul that long watches in darkness,
Stern silence that bursts into song,
Like the streams from lone mountain summits
Shall bear human hearts along.

74 *"THE PRINCE IN THE MIDST."*

For the struggle that lands us in freedom,
The pain and the pathos of strife,—
Like the might of a dying sunset,
Transfigure this human life.

Like the staircase in ancient houses,
Long winding and strangely dim ;
It is faith that is needed in climbing,
Faith rather than strength of limb.

But there's light at the different landings,
And rest in the upper room,
And a larger range of vision,
And glorious thoughts to come ?

How much of our life resembles
Time lost in going upstairs !
What days and weeks seem wasted,—
But—we're climbing unawares !

Rev. C. A. Fox.

VIII.

JESUS OUR CENTRE OF LIGHT.

"In the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of Man" (Rev. i. 13; ii. 1).

ALL the gain and glory hitherto brought out of having Jesus "in the midst" has been for ourselves, for our personal use and profit.

But the pardon and the praise, the peace, the power for prayer, and the comfort in trouble, have all to be spent now; and what we have learned in the furnace and the dark has to be told out to His glory.

"What the Master has told you in darkness
That speak ye in the light;
For the mightiest sons of thunder
Are the lonely seers of the night."

There must be an outlet if the river is to keep fresh; there must be an overflow if we are to know continual filling; the

light that is hidden will go out. There must be shining forth after He has shone in.

The thought of Jesus "in the midst" to give us light (Rev. i. 13; ii. 1) follows very fittingly on the vision of Him "in the midst" to sustain in the fire. For it is those who have been trained thus who can shine best; the furnace light, which lingers over those who have been with Him in the fire, is what attracts and allures others. It is those who have suffered most with Him who have the greatest power with others, because they can tell most of what He can be. It is the costly cut jewel which flashes most, and witnesses most brightly of the wealth of its owner. Is the sharp polishing, the furnace-proving, too great a price to pay for being the best and most winning witness for Him? It is "beaten" gold which forms the "pure candlestick" that stands in the temple of God.

Thus after suffering comes shining, and there He is "in the midst" for one as well as the other.

Our blessed Lord Jesus, we thank Thee, we adore Thee that Thou art prepared for this. We thank Thee that the closing vision of Thyself reveals Thee as the Son of Man walking "in the midst" of the golden candlesticks. Thou art in the central place to give us light for others, as well as to fill us with peace for ourselves. Let us never try to get out of Thy circle of light.

Some seem to think that He is "in the midst of the candlesticks" more like a spy than anything else; quick to mark a flicker in the light, and very ready to say, "I will remove thy candlestick out of his place." And so it is no comfort to them, but only gives them a miserable feeling that they are perpetually going to be found fault with.

Do any of us really have such unworthy, low thoughts of our glorious Lord? Do we really think that He is ever on the watch to trip up His child, and to extinguish the faltering light?

It is very different. He *died* to gain

the oil which alone makes the light burn steadily, and do you think He is so ready to cut off the supply? "He giveth not His Spirit by measure," and "He walketh in the midst" to see that every little light has its fulness of supply. "He will not quench the smoking flax," but fans it into a pure steady flame, giving light to *all* that are in the house. "He gives full credit for all that you possess, as He called Gideon 'Thou mighty man of valour,' for God is not so ungenerous as we often are."

Our Aaron "walketh" night and morning round His lamps. He is the central source of light to each. Once He has "lighted the lamps before the Lord," He *keeps* them burning, and "He shall order the lamps upon the pure candlestick before the Lord *continually*" (Lev. xxiv. 4). And it is most blessedly true, that when "*Thou* lightest the lamps, the seven lamps *shall* give light" (Num. viii. 2). There will be no flicker, no uncertainty then. If Jesus is "in the midst" of our shining, as well as of our praying, then we shall be *shielded*

lights, not liable to be blown out by currents of false doctrine; and *steady* lights, which will not flare unpleasantly to others.

Then, "ye are the light of the world," will not sound to us with only a crushing weight of responsibility, which we are quite unfit to bear, but with a strengthening sense of honour shared with Him. For we shall echo back His own word, "Thou art the light of the world" (John viii. 12; Matt. v. 14), knowing that we but reflect His light, with whom we have unhindered communication. The word used to describe His light and ours is in nearly all cases a different one, and implies that He *is* light, while we merely reflect it.

We shall allure to Him if He is "in the midst." For as the eye of some lost wanderer falls on the tiniest light in the circle, his glance cannot but follow inside the circle, until it rests on the central Light.

Some fear attracting others to themselves, because they think that they will pause there,* and go no further. But with

Jesus in the centre, that is impossible ; for we are each, as it were, a *Lamb-lit-lamp*, and the very light which has fascinated others has its source in Him, and will, sooner or later, be traced up to Him.

Yes, let us fascinate and allure as much and as many as ever we can ; only let us see that He is "in the midst" all the time.

This was the way with John, whom the Lord Himself named "a burning and a shining light" (John v. 35). And he bore "witness of *the* Light" by first proclaiming Jesus as "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world" (John i. 29). Then, as the One on whom the Spirit descended (ver. 32), and then, in almost unconscious utterance of adoration, he said of Jesus as He *walked*, "Behold the Lamb of God !" (ver. 36.) And the result was that His own disciples looked beyond the little lamp on the circle, and gazed at *the* Light. "The two disciples heard Him speak, and they followed Jesus." And he rejoiced : "He must increase, but I must decrease."

Jesus is "in the midst" as your salvation—is He "in the midst" of your shining, so that "*pure oil*" is constantly supplied, and there is no mixture of motive?

He is in the centre to supply the light to the least as well as the largest lamp, to see that the last lit has as much oil as the earliest lit: to "*dress the lamps*" so as that they shall not give a hindered, disagreeable light; to "*order*" them also, that they may shine *together*, in fellowship with each other.

When the experiment was being tried in London of lighting by electricity, a range of lamps on the Embankment was connected with one central generator. After a while the lamps nearest it went out, while those furthest off remained unwavering to the end. The reason was found to be that the wires of the near lamps had got entangled with passing wheels, or trodden on by footsteps, so that the connection between the lamp and the generator was broken.

So it is with us and Jesus. He is "in the midst" as the generator of our light; and as long as we are in communion with Him, it will burn unfalteringly until the morning break, and the shadows flee. But oh, let us take heed that our connection is sufficiently below the ground to run no risk of being broken or entangled. If it is a surface thing, any passing step will sever our link, and our light will go out.

Lord Jesus, may my shining be so purely from Thee as its source, that it shall burn steadily, pleasantly, alluringly, winning many to Thee, until the day that the lesser lights give way to the Sun, and candle and lamp are no more needed in the city of which the Lamb alone is the Light, and we shall see that "all Eternity is lit by one wounded Face!"

IX.

JESUS IN THE CENTRE FOR POWER.

“The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty”
(Zeph. iii. 17).

THE Lord Jesus cannot be “in the midst” to us for Power, unless He has been “in the midst” to us for Pardon. It is only His redeemed and forgiven ones who can say, “I will sing of Thy power.” For until we are forgiven, His power is only a cause of terror to us. But now it becomes our triumph, and we joyfully obey His summons, “Cry out, and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee!” (Isa. xii. 6.)

Now, every example of His power is full of joy to us. He appeals to His weighing of the mountains; to His measuring of the mighty sea in His hand (Isa. xl. 12); to the awful storms which one breath of His

can arouse (Ps. xviii. 7-15); to the heavens, which His word upholds, and to the earth as it "hangeth upon nothing" (Job xxvi. 7); as pledges of what He is prepared to do, first *for*, and then *in*, His children. The climax is, "He *giveth* power to the faint!" His cure for the depression of felt powerlessness is to bid us look away from it to *His* mighty power. (Isa. xl. 27, &c.)

But it is not so much that we need to be convinced of the *fact* of His great power. It would be hard to count the number of times that we have professed, "I believe in God the Father ALMIGHTY," and still harder to find out how often we have prayed "*Thine . . . is the power!*" But what we do need is to see that God has established a connection between His power and our weakness, so that it is available for our common daily use. We want to accept by faith that Jesus is "in the midst" to be our power under all circumstances and in every possible temptation.

When we understand that He has not only placed Himself there that we may

admire His power, but that He is there, linked with us, so that He may work in us, may fight in us, and may overcome in us, our lives will become very different. Up till now we may have owned our weakness to the full, but in such a way as the ten spies did when they measured it beside the might of their foes, instead of beside His promise of victory (Num. xiii. 31-33), and so their powerlessness became a barrier to His power, instead of a channel for it.

But now let us join the two facts practically, as we have so often joined them in singing, "I am weak, but Thou art mighty." "Weakness is God's best workshop," when we allow Him to enter it.

One of the most tremendous forces in nature has for centuries been the awe and wonder of the world. But, lately, the thought of utilising electricity as a means of power as well as of light has dawned, and is being tested in many parts. For years men watched Niagara with wonder and awe, and marvelled at the unlimited strength of its rapids and falls. Then the

thought came, "Can the force expended here be utilised?" It was known that "electrical energy can be transmitted to a distance, and even to many thousands of miles; but can it be transformed at the distant place into mechanical or any other required form of energy nearly equal in amount to that supplied?" Till now, the answer has been No! But now men are learning that they may say Yes. This is just about the position of many Christians who have seen Jesus "in the midst" for their pardon. They do not see that He is in the same spot for their power. They think of Him as "the glorious Lord," the "Creator of the ends of the earth," and they glory in knowing that they are linked with Him. But still He and His power seem too distant to be of any practical use to them, at least in little things. They think that they must fight out their own life, struggle with their faults, and if they are very hard up He will come from His distant place and deliver them.

Oh, thank God that it is so entirely

different! Thank God that Jesus is not only "great," but "great 'in the midst,'" where He is most accessible, and that He has Himself established the connection between us and Him. Listen to the next stage in this parable of His creation. "It has been supposed that to transmit the power of the Niagara Falls to New York a copper cable of enormous thickness would be needed. But it has been shown that the whole power might be transmitted by a fine copper wire, if only it could be sufficiently insulated." Is not this a wonderful pattern of the power of God? At Pentecost He established the link. "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." Now when we accept this fact, what is there to hinder an uninterrupted current of power flowing down from Him into us, so that He shall work in us, and through us, without hindrance? Nothing, absolutely nothing, on His part; but on ours there may be earth-contact—that breaks the stream of electricity at once. And we sadly know that the one thing which hinders

His power in us are thoughts of self; fear of man; self-exultation, which blinds our eyes to Him, and a false kind of self-depreciation, which equally blinds us to His might.

This is what we need to pray, "Lord Jesus, I do accept the fact of Thy power; I do believe that the link between me and Thee is secured; and faith would now fasten it to my needs; teach me how to keep it *insulated* and free from earth-contact, so that there may be no break in the flow of Thy power into me."

Shall we not accept as fully as He states it, that "All power is given unto *Me* in heaven and earth," and that He says, too, "I am *with you* alway?" He joins the two facts together; we dare not separate them. Then we shall grow skilful in *applying* the power we believe in; we shall find that no fault or fear, whether small or great, within or without; no sin in ourselves or in others, no failure in walk or in work, but can be overcome by the Lord, the strength of our life, working in us. And we shall echo the

joyous song, "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee *is* MIGHTY, *He* will save" (Zeph. iii. 17). "God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved" (Ps. xlv. 5). Then we shall know His word, "I give you power . . . over *all* the power of the enemy!" (Luke x. 19.) That is worth having, I think! And the beauty of this word is that He gave it not only to "the twelve," but to the unknown, unnamed "seventy." And so, insignificant child of His, who is like them a disciple and a messenger of His, this word is your inheritance. Claim it! And we shall find that when He has work to do, He selects the weak ones (1 Cor. i. 27-30), whom He changes into His "mighty ones," because they "rejoice in *My* Highness" (Isa. xiii. 2).

Some think that to speak of His power working in us in this entire way will only enervate us, and make us flabby, idle Christians. Just the contrary! It energises and nerves us. For in one sense He never works independently of us. It is "*my* hands" which He teaches to war, and

"*my fingers to fight*" (Ps. xviii. 33-39, cxliv. 1). It is "*His* right hand, and *His* holy arm, which have gotten Him the victory" (Ps. xcvi. 1), and we may say with triumph, without pride, "through God *we* shall do valiantly, for *He* it is that shall tread down our enemies." "Truly I am full of power by the Spirit of the Lord" (Ps. lx. 12; cviii. 13; Micah vii. 8). When He says, "*I* am able," has He not a right to say to us, "Be strong?"

Do not let us be discouraged because the effects of the believing in His power do not come all at once, sweeping away every enemy and difficulty in one great irresistible tide. It will be a gradual work, but oh, so certain, and our lives will become a continual proving of His power. After a dense night, you see one little ray creeping up into the blackness. You can hardly believe that in that little ray, which looks so feeble, there is power enfolded to change the deepest darkness into the most glorious day. But at noonday, as you stand in the full blaze of the sun, you look reverently back

to that early ray which, yielded to, has scattered the densest night.

God gives all His victories as pledges of more. Where He conquered once, He can conquer again. Every bit of proved power is the pattern of more, and we are to make it the ground of claiming more. "So *Jesus came again* into Cana of Galilee, where He made the water wine." "Where He has worked one miracle, is the place to expect Him to work another." Have you ever been amongst the hills on a cloudy day, and seen one lonely line of light lying on some peak or pass? That touch of light is both test and taste. It is a test, for it is so small that it tries faith to believe in more to follow; it is a taste, for it says to the faith which clasps it, "I herald the wealth behind," a wealth of light which has power to flood the whole scene with full sunshine, and to disperse every dark, doubtful cloud. Even so, every single victory is a pledge of the power which He is prepared to exert in us, when we see "*Him* in the

midst," and know that He is our power, and not merely that He gives it to us.

He means us to recall "every victory won," sadly saying if we do not, "They remembered not . . . the day when He delivered them from the enemy" (Ps. lxxviii. 42). Let us, then, make every past conquest a claim on Him for more; not recalling it contentedly and wanting no more, nor dejectedly, because it was only once, but with faith's restful certainty that He gave it as both pattern and pledge.

What shall we do then? We believe in the power; we believe in the channel; shall faith now fasten it to her own need, by saying, "Thou, O Lord, *art* in the midst—to be my power, as Thou hast been my pardon. Henceforward, teach me how to use Thee."

We have followed Him like the blind men (Matt. ix. 28); now we stand alone with Him in "the house." He stands in front of us, asking, "Believe ye that I am able to do *this*?" laying His finger on each failure; and faith fastens the link between

His power and every need, by two words, — "*Yea, Lord!*" and at once the current of power flows in upon the need. "*Then* touched He their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you!"

"As Peace is a Person, so Power is a Person also." It is the Holy Spirit Himself who is the Power, and He *is* ours, the inalienable gift to the Church of God. "God the Father is the source of Power, Christ is the channel of Power, the Holy Ghost *is* the Power. The Word is the window through which we see it, faith is the hand by which we grasp it, a broken heart is the exhausted receiver by which alone we can receive and retain it. The Cross is the flood-gate by which it flows to us: it is the wounds of Jesus which are its channel, and which have purchased it; and Pentecost follows Calvary by only forty days."

Are we low enough to receive? Nay, further, are we willing to know Calvary and death with Christ daily and experimentally, as we have learned it judicially?

X.

JESUS OUR CENTRE FOR PLENTY.

"Ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, . . . and ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel" (Joel ii. 26, 27).

"YE shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied." It is just what I want, for I am anything but satisfied; as for having plenty, it is as much as ever I can do to keep alive. But it surely refers to heaven: *there* I know is fulness of joy—*there* are rivers of pleasures—*there* are the feast and the satisfying, the overflow and the plenty. Down here I must expect nothing more than a bare subsistence, and weary, dragged-on existence.

Oh, poor, tired soul, whose very intensity of hunger blinds thee to God's limitless generosity of supply, there is a splendid word for thee to-day. Even the prodigal knew that in his father's house there was

"bread enough and to spare." There is "bread enough" for thee to-day in *my* Father's house. My Father's heart is breaking with love to thee; my Father sends His Hand-Jesus to thee, and it was pierced, "so that He can keep nothing of His good gifts back; they cannot but fall through." Thou hast thought of thyself as Lazarus, desiring to be fed with crumbs, and thou hast thought of God as the hard, rich man, living in splendour, ready to receive thee inside at last, and feast thee then; but that until then there was only the cold doorstep for thee, only the scanty crumbs, only the thought of future bliss and satisfying for thee, to enable thee to hold out through the chill and the scant measure of the days below. It almost breaks thy heart to think thus of the Lord who bought thee; but the fact remains the same, that thou art half-starved, dissatisfied, and unfilled, and what more convincing proof could there be that God is keeping back the plenty and the satisfying until the by-and-by?

It does sometimes dawn on thee that such action is not like God; that He who spared not to spend the blood of His own Son for thee, is not likely to starve or stint the one whom the ransom of that costly life redeemed from destruction; it does not look likely that He should be pleased that the one creature in all His creation who should live a beggarly life of bare sufficiency, should be the one whom He has adopted as His child, and taught to call Him "FATHER!" Everything else in creation marks Him as a God who "gives richly!"—the unneeded myriads of flowers even over wide and lonely wastes where they gladden few eyes but His own; the wealth of beauty in His glorious world, from the rich and fruitful levels, past the tangle and twining of fells and crags, up to the snow summits in whose eternal winter He has hidden the means of endless summer riches to the countries far and near—all tell of bounty, and nothing of grudging giving.

And art thou the only one who should be

unsatisfied ? the only one to know nothing of "plenty" except as to the future ?

"Oh, come and see ! oh, look, and look again !
All shall be right ;
Come, taste His love, and see that it is good,
Thou child of night !
Oh, trust thou, trust thou in His grace and power
Then all is right !"

He *does* mean that thou shouldst be satisfied even here, for see what is joined to the promise (Joel ii. 26, 27). Its fulfilment is not a question of *place*, or of *thy* position ; it is simply and solely a question of the position of *Jesus* ! "Ye shall know that I am in the midst !" Is this the reason, then, my Lord Jesus, why I have not been "satisfied ?" Is it indeed only because Thou hast not had Thy central place in me ? Yes, verily it is ; for it is quite impossible that He should have His own place and not fully satisfy, for "blessed is the man whom Thou choosest and causest to approach unto Thee we shall be satisfied with the goodness of Thy

house!" (Ps. lxx. 4.) Out in the cruel cold of self-pity, standing on the chilly threshold of the home in which thou hast a blood-won mansion, thou canst not tell what the satisfying, and the sunshine, and the plenty are inside. Come within! The Father's arms *have* clasped thee, the Father's lips *have* kissed thee, the reconciliation is over, and it is only left for thee to satisfy His fulness of love towards thee by letting Him lead thee inside, where thou shalt see Him as the head of the family, circled by His children, giving to the youngest its full portion.

Dost thou not yet believe that satisfying is possible here under every circumstance? If Jesus has the central place, there *must* be plenty as well as peace, praise, and power. He *did* hunger Himself, but that was that thou shouldst never need to endure the starved, shut-out feeling. And though it may be that in reckoning over the list of life-blessings He places this amongst them, that "He suffered thee to hunger" (Deut. viii. 3), it was only to

admit thee into deeper fellowship with Himself for a time. "Eat, O friends ; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved" (Cant. v. 1), is what He means for thee all through, and what He died to gain for thee. To be in the desert when Jesus was there, meant filling, not starving. When they were all grouped round Him, and every heart was towards Him as the one central figure, then it could be true that "they did all eat, and were filled."

He is our Joseph, the One who has charge of the unfailing granary "in the midst" of the famine-stricken lands. He is the One who gives His brethren so freely. He gives them coin as well as corn. There is wealth with the food *He* gives. It is not only barely enough, but with every gift there is means to buy more, and "provision *for the way*" as well. And when the brethren knew that Joseph was their own brother, they no more refused to take his gifts. Dare thou do less by thy Joseph, yearning soul? He *is* thy brother, and He watches for His reward in thy accepting.

If thou art feeling,—“I might believe and take if only I had not wandered,”—then see His matchless love. The promise, “Ye shall eat in plenty,” is given to those who *had* wandered, to whom *restoration* had to be promised (Joel ii. 25), and from whom *shame* had to be removed. Thou thinkest it presumption to claim such a promise! Nay, it is just the contrary; it needs the deepest humility to claim it, for thou canst only do so by owning at His feet that thou *art* in need of restoration; that the trees in thy garden, from which He expected fruit, have been stripped by canker and worm, by slowly eating cares conquering the leaves of life, or the rapid devastating of outer things. When *thou* dost take that place of utter self-abasement, then He takes His of being “in the midst,” bringing plenty with Him, and satisfying, and store for others, and endless overflow.

Then wilt thou “launch out on the deep of His love,” and let thyself loose on the tide of His infinite mercy, and give Him the joy of seeing His child satisfied, and

"knowing that *He* is God, and none else?" He said once—and it was to backsliders—"My people shall be satisfied with My goodness." Wilt thou give Him the triumph of saying of *thee*, as He did of them, "I *have* satiated the weary soul, and I *have* replenished every sorrowful soul?" (Jer. xxxi. 14, 25.)

Oh, tender Lord, is this Thy gladness and Thy glory? Does it make Thee rejoice to have satiated one weary soul? I should have thought that the satisfaction of the angels, in and around Thee, would have made Thee glad enough. But nay! I have to do with a Lord who is not "satisfied" (Isa. liii. 11) Himself, until His sorrowful souls are "replenished;" who satisfies Himself by "drawing out His soul to the hungry" (Isa. lviii. 10, 11); who finds His own meat in feeding the starving (John iv. 32, 33).

Then I dare not starve my Lord by refusing to let Him satisfy; I *will* take the place of humiliation, so that He may be

able to take the place "in the midst," whence He can satisfy me continually!

Then come, and come now. Do not grieve Him with thy shivering outside in the cold, and thy wilful starving in the midst of plenty, adding to thy sin of distrust by thinking He does not care.

"Nay, do not wrong Him with thy heavy thoughts,
But love His love;
Do thou full justice to His tenderness,
His mercy prove;
Take Him for what He is, oh, take Him all,
And look above!"

He *is* able to satisfy thee *here* as fully as ever He will in heaven; for can He fill heaven and earth, and not fill one poor little empty soul? Never! It all depends on *His* position. There *must* be plenty where He is "in the midst," the blessed loaf of Life to fill the children's needs.

And when at last we have ventured out upon His boundless love, how we shall grieve that we were so long in satisfying Him, and we shall say—

" 'Give me to drink !' Could God in human form
Crave His own creature from created worm ?
Besides, I marked He never asked again
Water to drink,—no, deeper was His pain.
He must have meant, Oh, satisfy Me first ;
Oh, quench My soul with thy soul, for I thirst !
I thirst for souls, oh, give Me souls to drink !
I thirst for *souls* ! 'twas this He meant, I think.
At once I should have answered, O Lord, drink !
Drink from me, Lord, where sin so often sips ;
Drink out the poison with Thy sinless lips."

And then when plenty follows through
Jesus being "in the midst," all around
shall know. It will be no secret, silent
thing, done between God and thee. "Ye
shall receive no more reproach of famine
among the heathen," for all around shall
see the barren land made fruitful ; when
they look at thee they cannot think that
our God is an ungenerous God, who gives
grudgingly, but by thy plenty they shall
be obliged to own "The Lord hath done
great things for them !" Thy prosperity
is His glory. He makes thee to flourish
that it may be seen "how true the Lord
my strength is !" (Ps. xcii. 13, 14, P. B. V.)

XI.

JESUS OUR CENTRE AS THE HOLY ONE.

"I am God, and not man : the HOLY ONE in the midst of thee" (Hos. xi. 9).

OUR thoughts of adoring praise throng around our blessed Lord Jesus as the PRIEST in the midst, from whom we have our full pardon. No words can hold the grateful joy as we see Him clearer and clearer as the One who has finished transgression, and made an end of iniquity.

But He comes before us in another character. "The HOLY ONE in the midst of thee" (Hosea xi. 9). Do we welcome Him with the same joy in this light? It is a very searching thought, "Am I as glad to see Jesus in the centre as the One who will cleanse me from the *power* of sin, as I am to see Him there as the One who has redeemed me from the *penalty* of it?"

Must we in honesty say "No?" Is it possible that we are practically saying, "Lord Jesus, I accept Thy pardon very gratefully, I admit thee as my Priest, but I cannot permit Thee to take possession of me as the Holy One?"

We are so afraid that to admit Him as the Holy One means only pain and woe, disappointment, temples emptied, idols dethroned; we think that while the PRIEST bears a blessed charter of free and full forgiveness, the HOLY ONE has a knife, a scourge of small cords, a burning fire, which He will ruthlessly use to drive out and consume many a thing we do not wish to part with. And we are right in a measure, for He is so resolved that His temples shall be cleansed, that He will use a scourge of small cords to drive out all that is defiling it (John ii. 15); yea, He will come again (Matt. xxi. 12) and clear out all the things which, under the guise of daily, even sacred duties and cares, are choking up the places which ought to be sacred to Him, and which are the thieves

robbing us of the power of prayer and of true worship. But He only forces His way in after having vainly waited to be admitted willingly. Where we surrender ourselves to His searching, His ways are very different.

We think of His title of the "Holy One" as a name of awe and dread, but just see the unutterable tenderness with which He brings this name of His before His wandering children. "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within Me, My repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of My anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man; *the Holy One in the midst of thee*" (Hosea xi. 8, 9). The very reason of His tenderness and compassion is His being the Holy One. Trace through Isaiah how often He calls Himself the Holy One, joining it so constantly with His name of Redeemer (Isa. xliii. 14, &c.), and often also using it in

connection with some very blessed promise, such as "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee . . . *for* I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel thy Saviour" (Isa. xliii. 2, 3). If He is to be fully our "Redeemer," He must be our "Holy One," for the full purpose of His death was not only to deliver from the guilt, but from the power of sin, and as long as we are willing that any sin should have dominion over us, we do not know Him fully as the Holy One. Can we not trust His wounded hands to deal gently, as well as faithfully, with us?

Knowing this, then, is it possible that any of us should still say, "Lord Jesus, I admit Thee as my Priest, I am glad of Thy forgiveness, but I do not want Thy cleansing; Thou shalt not have the central place as the Holy One?" It seems impossible, but yet it is true practically, and it needs almost a second conversion to many, before we see Him and accept Him as Purger and Purifier, as well as Priest.

If any now reading this are conscious

that it is so with them, oh, stop and think ; think of the grief to Him to see His complete salvation ignored or rejected. Think of the sorrow He will feel when, after pleading for His place in you as the Holy One, your refusal obliges Him to come with the fire, and the knife, and the scourge, which He only uses when there is no other way of cleansing. For the certain thing is, that He *must* purge ; He must have His own "pure in heart." He "is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity," and He cannot see it in you without cleansing. Oh, surrender willingly now to Him as the Holy One !

But if Jesus has had the central place as the Priest from the very moment of our conversion, then at once, when the Holy Ghost reveals Him to us as the Holy One, we bow to Him gladly as such. For to see Jesus crucified makes sin so hateful to us that, seeing what it cost Him, we lay ourselves at His feet, saying, "Lord, cleanse me at any cost." When we were pardoned it was such a blessing to know that He knew the worst of us ; knew down to the

very deepest, darkest, most disgraceful depths of sin in us, far beyond what we knew, or could have imagined; not only the actual faults, but the possibilities; not only the plants, but the seeds. Then that verse became a triumph to us, and not a terror, "Thou hast set our iniquities before Thee, our secret sins in the light of Thy countenance" (Psa. xc. 8), because it told us that He knew just how much there was to forgive, and that we need never be haunted with the thought that the increasing sight of sin, which startles and horrifies us, is strange to Him, or will ever surprise Him. And if we are glad to think that He knew how much there was to forgive, we are as grateful to know that He knows how much there is to cleanse. And "He will not fail, nor be discouraged," but will complete His work; and He says to His redeemed ones, "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from *all* sin" (1 John i. 7). Thank God that He "*is* a consuming fire," who *will* burn the sin in us!

Oh yes, we thankfully hail Him as the

Holy One! We will "give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness" instead of trembling at it, for His holiness is the pledge of ours; and He will not rest until our outward lives are covered before men with the robe of righteousness with which He has already covered us before God. He "will purely purge away our dross, and take away all our tin" (Isa. i. 25). And oh, we are so grateful! for year by year we find it more impossible to cleanse ourselves apart from Him. Our yearning cry is—

"Lord Jesus, I long to be perfectly whole,
I want Thee for ever to live in my soul,
Break down every barrier, cast out every foe,
Now wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."

"He does not bear His Name of Jesus in vain!" Oh, let us surrender to Him fully, and day by day we shall find things brought under His control which for long we vainly struggled against; motives will be purified, imaginations brought down, thoughts made captive, which long baffled us. We shall find the blessedness of what a working-man

rejoiced in, saying, "Thank God, my soul is under entirely new management!" No weakness in *His* love will permit Him to falter in His cleansing work. He will do it tenderly, but He will do it thoroughly. And oh, the joy of having no secret from Jesus! nothing that we do not like Him to see, but our hearts are open to Him, "iniquity put away," and therefore we are able to "lift up our face to Him without spot" (Job xxii. 23-26; xi. 13-15).

Bring all to the scathing, searching light of His holiness, and He will consume it. "He *will* thoroughly purge His floor." This does not mean *our* wearily dredging and dragging the dark depths of our own souls. Oh, the hopeless, disheartening work that is! and often our bent heads bowed with woe and dismay over the sin we did not know of before, prevent us seeing Him, and clouds all our joy of conscious pardon. He says, "*I* will search Jerusalem with candles." Let us respond, "Search me, O God." Look up, and see Him taking His place in the centre, from whence He can reach to

cleanse every spot: and give yourself to Him again. "What we need is not so much *self*-examination, but *Christ*-examination." Self-examination alone is sure to discourage, but Christ-examination always inspirits, for whatever He is in Himself, He has power to be in His people. Let Him have His way.

Then, when you and He are agreed on this point, and you do fully let "Him have His way unhindered *in you*," then we may *glory* in the "Holy One of Israel" (Isa. xli. 16). We know that He will keep true to His word, "I will take away out of the midst of thee them that rejoice in thy pride" (Zeph. iii. 11), for pride and He cannot dwell together. He is the "*just* Lord in the midst," who is "faithful and just—not only to *forgive* us our sins, but also to *cleanse* us from all unrighteousness" (1 John i. 9).

And then it will come about that He "will be the glory in the midst of thee!" (Zech. ii. 5.) That is what we yearn for, that He should be glorified in us, and He is as prepared to bear full sway within, as to

circle us with an impregnable defence. Do we agree that He should ?

Then, besides ; when " His sanctuary, His holy dwelling, is in the midst of His people for evermore," He will "*multiply*" us. Increased fruitfulness comes from Jesus being in the midst as the Holy One ; and further still, " the *heathen* shall know that I, the Lord, do sanctify Israel, when My sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore " (Ezek. xxxvii. 26-28). Is this worth having ?

There is one thing more. When Jesus is in His proper place, " in the midst," we share it with Him. He is able to associate us with Himself. The place which is His by right He shares with us. If He is *our* centre, then we become the centre of blessing to those around us—" the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people as a dew from the Lord," and the next verse says, " as a lion " (Micah v. 7, 8). The gentle and the daring characters have all their place in His employ ; both the dew and the lion are needed in His service. And when He wants to give an effectual lesson, He

looks around, and His eye falls on the little child who is watching with eyes fixed on Him: and him He takes "and sets in the midst of them, and when He had taken him in His arms, He said" (Mark ix. 36).

Let that be the blessed and manifest picture of you and me, a little child in the midst with Jesus, too trustful to struggle away from His encircling arms, content to be a text from which He may preach. Do let us now say, "Jesus, Lord, I surrender to Thee as the Holy One: work Thy will in me: cleanse me, clear me, purge me, that I may be a true witness unto Thee!" and His word be fulfilled that we shall be "a blessing in the midst of the land" (Isa. xix. 24).

XII.

THE LAMB IN THE MIDST OF THE THRONE.

"I beheld, and lo in the midst of the Throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb, as it had been slain" (Rev. v. 6).

CAN any one doubt that the rightful place of the Lord Jesus Christ is "in the midst?" Then who will yield it to Him? This is real consecration, for consecration is *allowing God the use of His own*; it is resigning our right to the place which is His. Consecration is not giving over to Him something that was our own; it is not a wonderful act of generous resigning to Him what we might have kept: it is simply owning Him to be Lord; it is saying, "Thou, O Lord, *art* in the midst," and then acting as if He were, and referring everything to Him.

Then the balance of our lives will be just and equal. Then the little world of

our lives will keep as true as the Universe rolls in unswerving regularity, and yet infinite variety, round the Central Sun. When Jesus is our Central Sun, there will be *nothing* hid from the heat thereof; every action will be glorified, because every motive purified; there is no corner of our life's garden which the Sun shall not touch, and awake into beauty and fruitfulness; no hidden seed of His Word lying in any part of the soil of our hearts which His penetrating, prevailing presence shall not bring into visible life and light. When He is the pivot on which our life turns, the axle round which every action revolves, there will be order and evenness. When He is "the Tree of Life in the midst" of our garden, there will be Paradise—beauty and harmony again, and God can look at the result of His own Son's handiwork, and say, "very good." There is no monotony in the life of which Jesus is the centre, but endless variety, as every plant is touched with a ray from Him.

When all is so much for our own gain,

it does seem strange that Jesus should have to plead for His own place, standing outside the door of His own children's hearts, instead of His being welcomed at once, and every door thrown wide open to Him; every material put at once within His reach; every instrument resigned to His wielding; "every faculty made a chair for Him to rest upon; every talent a throne from which He may rule." It is unreasonable, as well as strange; for can we imagine what the motion of a carriage would be if its axles were not in the centre of its wheels? It is impossible even to think of. And yet we are so unreasonable as to think our lives will be well balanced without their one, their only centre. No wonder that they jar, and that their broken, dislocated movement is so uncomfortable and so irritating. All is even, only where Jesus is "*in the midst.*"

"Thou art the source and centre of all minds,
Their only point of rest, Eternal Word !
From Thee departing, they are lost, and rove
At random, without honour, hope, or peace."

Yes, He shall have it. He is our "Daysman," "in the midst," between God and us; the one appointed "to lay His hand upon both" (Job ix. 33). He stands "betwixt us" as the PRIEST, with one wounded hand resting on me, "dead in trespasses and sins," while the other rests on the Life, linking me for ever with Himself, in whom is eternal life. He stands "betwixt us" as the PRINCE, one hand laid tenderly on my weakness, while the other is laid on the throne, linking me with might as well as with life, and establishing a connection by which the power I need shall pass uninterruptedly into me—a connection which cannot be broken, because it is no mere line or fragile wire, but the very living Lord Himself; the Priest, by whom I have pardon, being also the Prince by whom I have power; and as long as He hath life to stand betwixt, and love to keep His wounded hands on each, so long is my linking safe. He stands "betwixt us" as the PROPHET, with one hand on my ignorance, and the other laying hold of the

wisdom of God, uniting us with such effect that He Himself can write, "Ye know all things." He stands "betwixt us" as the HOLY ONE, with one hand, which bears the mark of the eternal hatred of God to sin, laid on my impurity, while the other, also pleading its token of *paid penalty*, grasps the purity of God and conveys it to me; for He who has imputed righteousness to me by faith, can as easily and as freely impart it to me by faith as well.

He stands "in the midst," not only betwixt God and me, but betwixt Satan and me, Himself "the shield of my salvation," pierced by every dart which the accuser can aim against me (Psa. xlv. 5). He stands, too, betwixt my self and me, the self which hinders, impedes, and distresses me; the self which whispers doubts and fears. Shall He not then be allowed His own, His only place in my *life*? Shall He not be allowed to be the centre round which every plan revolves—every motive circles? If He is the centre, the highest ambition may have its full, safe swing, the

noblest aims may have their freest flight. No life can be low, either in its aim or its attaining, in its efforts or its effects, which has Christ Jesus the Lord, God blessed for ever, as its centre !

Has not "the time past of our life sufficed" us to have had Him "in a corner?" Shall not this present time see the last of His being hidden away, and "Give this man place," be henceforth freely, unreservedly obeyed? Is it possible to refuse Him the place in our lives which He has in creation ?

We know the countless, boundless results. *Praise*, which rings on unbroken through the dark or through the light (Psa. xxii. 22 ; Heb. ii. 12) ; *Peace*, His own peace, undisturbed by the fiercest storm (John xx. 19-26) ; *Prayer*, which rises at every moment in successful pleading (Matt. xviii. 20) ; *Presence* of the Son of God through the furnace fire, though it be heated seven-fold (Dan. iii. 25) ; *Perpetual shining* for Him in this night-world (Rev. i. 13 ; ii. 1) ; *Protection* through the fiercest storms

which the devil can raise (Psa. xlv. 5); *Power* from the throne, all the wealth of the Holy Ghost passing through Him to us (Zeph. iii. 17; Isa. xii. 6); *Plenty*, unstinted supply, always dropping freshly and freely through His pierced hands (Joel ii. 27). Is the list long enough: is it safe to venture to let Him be on His rightful seat?

But how long will it last? We have had glimpses of each of these blessings, but they faded, and we are left with hungry hearts. But the Lord does not mean us to have precarious peace and flickering light, or uncertain power.

This is what He means: "Lo, I come, and will *dwell* in the midst of thee!" (Zech. ii. 10, 11.) When He takes His place, His mind is to *keep* it—is it our mind that He should? Where *He* dwells, peace dwells, power dwells, praise dwells. Abiding gifts come only with an abiding giver: fruit only "remains" where the sap is perpetually flowing through the centre of the bough which bears it. Precarious praise

or peace tells of a precarious presence. He wants to *dwell*. "Let them make Me a sanctuary, that I *may* dwell among them!" (Ex. xxv. 8); and one of the closing calls from above is the triumph cry of the "great voice from heaven, saying, Behold, the Tabernacle of God is with men, and He *will* dwell with them!" (Rev. xxi. 3.) He says of each heart redeemed to Himself, "Here will I dwell, for I have desired it." Shall we each hear Him say, "*Thou* hast given Him His heart's desire?" He twice repeats, "I will set My sanctuary in the midst of them *for evermore*—in the midst of them *for evermore*!" (Ezek. xxxvii. 26-28.)

And for fear that He should be kept out of this place He yearns to fill, by any one saying, "He *had* once the central place in my heart, but other things fill it now, and I can hardly expect Him back again," He writes on purpose, "I am *returned* unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem!" (Zech. viii. 3.) Accept Him again; believe in His longing to be "at home" in you again, and you shall find nothing but

"loving kindness in the midst," and no reproach.

Such glorious things must be *gradual*, you say,—we cannot know all at once. Then do you think that Jesus is to be yielded inch by inch of our life, and that at last He shall have fought His way to the centre, and reach it just as we die? Oh no! Jesus in the midst may be owned at once, a fixed fact from this moment, and then comes the gradual part—the unfolding of the boundless results, the double peace, the secured praise, and all the rest of the blessed train.

But there is one closing picture of the Lord Jesus Christ which cannot be left out. We started with seeing Him as the Lamb in the Midst of the thieves; we close with seeing Him as the Lamb in the Midst of the Throne! "I beheld, and lo, in the Midst of the Throne . . . stood a Lamb as it had been slain!" He who was the CENTRAL SACRIFICE is now seen to be the CENTRAL SOVEREIGN. He who was in the Midst of the thieves to redeem, is now in the Midst

of the Throne to feed ; in the Midst of the thieves He was smitten that the waters of life might flow, now in the Midst of the Throne He "leads to living fountains of waters" (Rev. vii. 17). His undried tears in the Midst of the thieves give Him the power to wipe the tears from every eye from the Midst of the Throne.

If we want to see Him in His glory with gladness, we must have first seen Him in His sorrow : first in Atonement, then in Enthronement ; first our sighs must have been wrung out round Him as our Redeemer, before our songs can throng round Him as our King of eternity. Our central sole source of pardon becomes our central source of praise. For the deepest source of adoration at seeing His glory will be this, "The Lamb in the Midst of the Throne, the centre of worship to every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, is the same Lamb who was in the Midst of the thieves *for me !*"

The Lamb SLAIN is in the midst. "All eyes are fixed on Him. He is the centre of everything. He is the centre of history—the centre of God's purposes—the centre of redemption—the centre of the Bible—the centre of the Church!" Is He the centre of your life now? prominent, that all shall know it (Joel ii. 27); accessible, so that everything may be at once referred to Him? If so, then our joy shall be double at seeing Him then; for we shall be proud in the exaltation of our Jesus: His joy shall be ours. "It shall be to *them* a renown, the day *I* shall be glorified, saith the Lord God" (Ezek. xxxix. 13).

Thank God for His picture of opened Heaven, showing us our Lamb "in the Midst of the Throne" to tell of His universal sovereignty; "in the Midst of the elders," to tell us that He still holds personal communion with His redeemed ones; "in the Midst of the street as the Tree of Life" with healing leaves, in eternal reminder that He who is the centre of the golden city, is the

One we touched for healing as He passed
along this world's highway.

" Christ is the heart of Heaven,
Triumphant now He stands ;
The sceptred Man in Heaven,
With nail-prints in His hands.
Christ is the heart of Heaven,
Its fulness and its bliss !
No banquet, e'en in Heaven,
For hungering souls like this ! "

God my Father, God the Saviour, God
the Holy Ghost, Centre of Heaven, be *my*
heart's centre, and thence stretch out Thy
rule into the utmost bound of my being, so
that there shall be nothing in me which
does not own Thy central sway, now and
evermore !

Yes, and let it be soon ! for we know
not how near His return may be. We
know not how soon He shall be recognised
through His kingdom as the One who is
in the Midst, the One who holds the reins
of the Universe.

"All kingdoms crowd Thy court, great Solomon,
True Son of David, glorious Son of God !

Thine is a court of kings ; through jewelled
gates,

Glad with perpetual sunrise, flock from far,
Nations, and tongues, and languages, to hear
New worlds of wisdom issuing from Thy lips,
Systems of shining truths, orb lit by orb
In ever-kindling streams ! and at Thy feet
Climes many-coloured cluster, like the fruit
Of many soils, but ripened by one sun.

And at Thy feet all languages lie down,
And kingdoms couch, to feed with upward gaze
Upon Thy Face, and drink with thirsty ear
The moving music of Jehovah's mouth,
And catch the living Scriptures from His lips."

—*Royal Interviews.*

"And this God is *our* God !" This
glorious King, whose central sway the
whole Universe shall own, is waiting to
be in our Midst. Oh, let us allow Him
now to take that place in our lives, which
by one consent every people, nation, and
language shall give Him then, and His
Throne be their one Eternal Centre, and
His name the heart of their endless song !









